



SQUELCH TALES



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Assoc. for November 1999

147.21 REPEATER BEING TWEEKED & PEEKED

Bowdoin College: This month Peter Russell, K1MJP and Bruce Randall, W1ZE replaced the KS1R/R 147.21 MHz repeater with a back up repeater consisting of a GE Exec-II transmitter & Receiver. During this period the tech committee will change the PL tone from 88.5 Hz to 100.0 Hz, accomplish controller audio string modifications, make adjustments and give the equipment a good cleaning.

Until the original repeater is reinstalled the 444.4 repeater will be taken off-line so that it's controller can be used on the temporary 2-meter repeater and maintain basic autopatch capabilities. This controller does not have Auto-Dial capabilities, so you will have to dial the whole personal or emergency number you wish to call. For those of you that have not used the 444.4 controller-autopatch here is the process when dialing a number.

- Like the old process, announce your intention to access the autopatch.
- Key (PTT) your transceiver and press the star (*) button on your touch-tone pad, let up on the button and let go of the PTT key. You should hear dial tone.
- Press your PTT key and enter the number you want to call on your touch-tone pad. You will hear the number ring.
- To hang up (disconnect from autopatch), Key your transceiver and press the pound (#) button on your touch-tone pad. The autopatch will disconnect and repeater will ID (in CW).
- Announce you are clear from the autopatch.

SAGADAHOC COUNTY E.M.A. OFFICIAL ENLISTS MARA HELP

Bath: At the October MARA meeting the guest speaker was Ms. Eileen Nutt, from the Sagadahoc County Emergency Management Agency. She advised the attendees of the county's plan to initiate an effective and model emergency management agency. EMA wants the Amateur Radio operators in the county to play a significant role in their efforts to respond to the citizens of the county in the event of an emergency.

The members in attendance expressed their willingness to assist in this effort. It was recognized that not all MARA members are residents of the county and there are many hams in Sagadahoc County that are not MARA members. However the MARA would be willing to facilitate the county's effort in enlisting the support of all the Amateur Radio operators in the county.

MARA's Chris McGraw, KB2SKP, has already provided many hours of volunteer work for Sag. EMA and has attended all their meetings plus helped set up their web site. On November 10th Bruce Randall, W1ZE and Loren Dudley, W1LHD did a site survey of the county EMA communications vault in the county courthouse in Bath. They will generate a report and submit it to Ms Nutt that will recommend what equipment is available and what else could and/or should be done to set up an effective EMA/Amateur Radio comm. Center.

If you are a Sagadahoc County resident, think about participation in this worthwhile project. It is what Ham Radio is all about.

CHRISTMAS DINNER REMINDER

The annual Christmas Dinner for MARA members, their family and friends will be held at the China Rose Restraint on Old Bath Road, Brunswick (old Chuck Wagon) on Saturday, December 18th at 6:30 PM.

We hope that you mark that date and time on your calendar, so you can join your fellow MARA hams for the all-you-can eat buffet.

NEWINGTON NEWS

"BUZZ SAWS" ABOUND ON HF

"The HF buzz saw is dead; long live the HF buzz saw!" That might be the cry from the crowd these days as various buzzing intruders have been showing up with some regularity on HF. Sometimes, though, it's hard to distinguish one intruder from the other on the basis of anecdotal reports from amateurs.

Recent reports of the so-called 125-Hz "buzz saw" intruder on the 80-meter band are a case in point. The intruder--heard primarily in the US northeast--had plagued amateurs as well as an aeronautical weather station just below 80. In the wake of protests from amateurs and coordination between the ARRL and Radio Amateurs of Canada, the transmissions--determined to come from two HF surface wave radar facilities in Newfoundland--moved off the amateur band. The signal has not been heard on 80 meters since early October.

IARU Region 2 Monitoring System Coordinator Martin Potter, VE3OAT, credited ARRL and RAC assistance in getting the HFSWR systems moved off the amateur bands. The HF surface wave radar sites in Newfoundland are a joint project of Canada's Department of National Defense and Canadian industry. Canadian officials see the technology as playing a role in maintaining Canada's Territorial sovereignty as well as for search-and-rescue operations and to assist in combating illegal immigration and drug smuggling.

Responding to the initial "buzz saw" reports, amateurs in the US and elsewhere alerted the ARRL Monitoring System to a plethora of signals they claimed were the now-infamous intruder. It's now clear, however, that a similar mystery visitor on 40 meters is not coming from the Newfoundland

HFSWR facilities. "Although a number of additional reports of buzz-like interference were received from the western USA and elsewhere, none could be confirmed as due to the same signal," Potter said. The signal has been widely reported in Region one.

ARRL member Dave Bowker, K1FK, in extreme northern Maine was the first to report--and graph--both the "original" 80-meter buzz saw as well as the more-recent 40-meter signal. "Although it sounds similar, it has three distinctly different characteristics," he said. The signal's sidebands extend 7 kHz either side and "it is a frequency hopper, moving randomly in time and frequency steps."

Steve Yates, AA5TB, in Fort Worth, Texas, also has monitored, graphed and recorded the 40-meter signal, and his observations are consistent with Bowker's. "The transmissions would jump frequencies every few minutes but not at regular intervals," he says. He reports measuring the different transmission center frequencies at about 7020, 7040, 7050, 7070, 7080 and 7090 kHz, and believes the signals came from the same transmitter. Yates has posted information about this and other intruders at <http://home.swbell.net/aa5tb/>.

The IARU Region 2 Monitoring System now refers to the 40-meter intruder as an "unusual jammer," but concedes, "If the signal is truly a jammer, it is not clear who or what the target is." Potter says the signal is modulated by strong harmonics of 50 Hz and 100 Hz and seems to be associated with a "wobble" or "bubble" jammer on the same frequencies.

Another "buzzer" on 3795 kHz has been reported to the ARRL Monitoring System from hams in various parts of the US including Rich Chatelain, K7ZV, in California, and Bill Avery, K6GNX, in Nevada. Both agree that the signal appears to be coming from somewhere along the Utah-Nevada border. "It transmits for 80 seconds every five minutes. It is approximately 20 kHz wide," Avery said.

Potter says the 3795 kHz signal is worthy of further investigation. Additional reports and observations are welcome to ARRL Monitoring System Administrator Tom Hogerty, KC1J, thogerty@arrl.org.

CQ VHF, CQ, MAGAZINES TO MERGE

CQ VHF magazine will end publication at year's end and be merged into an expanded CQ magazine. That announcement came this week from CQ Publisher Richard Ross, K2MGA. The merger takes effect with the January 2000 issue.

CQ says factors in the decision included its own survey results showing that a majority of CQ VHF readers also are active on HF; the inclusion of one or more VHF/UHF bands in many new HF radios; and the forthcoming FCC restructuring decision that is widely expected to make broad HF privileges more easily accessible to current Technician and Tech Plus class hams.

"The line between HF and VHF has been forever blurred, if not erased," said Rich Moseson, W2VU, who edits both magazines. "Clearly, the time for a separate VHF magazine is past."

A reader survey--conducted in the August 1999 issue of CQ VHF and published on page 32 of the November issue--revealed that 62% of CQ VHF readers have at least some HF operating privileges, and that of that group, more than two-thirds--69%--are active on both HF and VHF. In addition, 46% said HF operating is an important part of their overall ham operating,

Starting in January 2000, CQ will be expanded by 32 pages to accommodate increased VHF coverage. Current CQ VHF subscribers will have their subscriptions transferred to CQ, while those who subscribe to both magazines will have their CQ subscriptions extended by the number of remaining issues. Additional details will be published in the December issues of CQ VHF and CQ.

CQ and CQ VHF magazines are published by CQ Communications Inc. of Hicksville, New York, which also publishes CQ Contest, Communications Quarterly, Popular Communications and Electronic Servicing & Technology magazines. For more information, contact Rich Moseson, W2VU, or Richard Ross, K2MGA, 516-681-2922.-CQ Publications news release

Happy Thanksgiving
to you all

Y2K, are you ready?

By W1ZE

There is a lot of hype about Y2K and like many of you I think the year 2000 + one second is going to be a big yawn, hopefully a big yawn.

Several dedicated MARA members are going to be manning the local hospitals, but what are the rest of us doing JUST IN CASE?

I for one plan to get good nights sleep. Why, because I have made preparations. We have logs for the wood stove, about two weeks of canned and dry goods and 20+ gallons of drinking water. We have a bag of flashlight and lantern batteries in the refrigerator and kitty litter and cat food for the house feline. If we do lose the service of Central Maine Power and Bell Atlantic goes into cardiac arrest, I have a big deep-cycle storage battery to run the ham shack on HF, VHF and UHF. I will have all the HT batteries fully charged New Years Eve. If we do not lose power I have already changed the year settings in my PC with Windows 98 from 2 digits to four digits so that it will not get confused with other on-line services.

Do what you have to do to make sure you can care for you and yours, and that you can communicate via HAM RADIO for at least a day or two. If you have an AC generator make sure it works a few days before New Years and your equipment is ready to go.

The KS1R/R 147.21 machine has generator back-up provided by Bowdoin College and if they have telephone service, and you do not, you can still call out.

It will be nice to get up New Years morning to the smell of your automatic electric Mr. Coffee making your morning cup of Joe and finding out your bathroom light comes on when you flip the switch on your way to the porcelain facility. You can tell yourself "Y2K, much to do about nothing!" (Thank Goodness)

Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association

KS1R

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***Come to the MARA Meeting
Thursday November 18th at the Salvation
Army Build
25 Congress Street, Bath, Maine***